

Interim Hazel Dormouse Footprint Tunnel Guidance

This guidance is intended to be used by those who already have some experience of hazel dormouse ecology and surveying, or who have received appropriate training in the use of footprint tunnels.

Equipment



The footprint tunnels are made of 400mm lengths of 65mm square downpipe with a 9mm plywood insert of 500mm which allows a landing platform at each end. We tried smaller lengths, however the paper tended to become wet.

The plywood insert has a strip of 250gsm/350mic thick white card attached by double sided sticky tape at each end. Spare cards can be prepared in advance of surveys. The card is placed in the middle of the plywood, with a strip of masking tape at each end which holds the tracking medium. No bait is used to reduce the amount of activity by non target species.

Tracking Medium

The ink is made up by mixing 3 heaped teaspoons of ultra fine pharmaceutical grade activated charcoal powder with 15 level teaspoons of olive oil. This makes enough for approximately 50 tunnels. This is applied to the masking tape with a paintbrush. We make the ink up in a jar and then transport it in the field in a wooden nest box, as it can be messy to handle.

Survey

In our study the tunnels were placed at 15—20m intervals with 50 tunnels used per site. We will update this guidance once the data has been fully analysed to see if this can be reduced.

The tunnels should be tied to the underside of horizontal branches, unless they can be securely fastened above. We used black cable ties of 380mm x 4.7mm. The tunnels are more likely to detect dormice if they are selectively placed in dense vegetation. They can be put up in all habitat types where dormice are likely to be found, including woodland, scrub and hedgerows.

The tunnels should be checked and re-inked every 2 weeks. This is because the ink dries out and the papers can become damaged by molluscs or mice or become mouldy if the weather has been wet. The papers should be changed if there has been any footprint activity. The masking tape should be replaced only if required.

Surveying should be avoided during heavy rain as the papers do not stick effectively when wet.



Timing

Most frequent dormouse evidence was found between May and October, although we also detected footprints in April and November.

In the spring we also found lots of bird activity and in the autumn wood mouse activity became prolific.

How to distinguish dormouse footprints from *Apodemus* footprints

Hazel dormouse



Front foot



Hind foot



Apodemus species (Very difficult to distinguish between wood mouse and yellow necked mouse)



Front foot



Hind foot

